

NCA7
BACKGROUND 5-5650
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PAKISTAN INTERIM GOVERNMENT?

ANNCR:

IN PAKISTAN, THE IDEA OF BRINGING POLITICAL LEADERS INTO AN INTERIM COALITION GOVERNMENT TO SERVE UNTIL NEW ELECTIONS ARE HELD IS ONCE AGAIN UNDER DISCUSSION. CORRESPONDENT FRED BROWN HAS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT:

VOICE:

THE IDEA REPORTEDLY WAS FIRST PUT FORWARD LAST YEAR AT A TIME WHEN PAKISTAN WAS PREPARING FOR NEW GENERAL ELECTIONS TO RETURN THE COUNTRY TO CIVILIAN RULE. THE ELECTIONS, SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER EIGHTEENTH, WERE CALLED OFF BY THE COUNTRY'S CHIEF MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR, GENERAL MOHAMMAD ZIA- UL- HAQ, ON GROUNDS OF THREATENED VIOLENCE. GENERAL ZIA ALSO SAID HE WANTED TO COMPLETE WHAT WAS CALLED THE PROCESS OF ACCOUNTABILITY -- THAT IS, THE TRIALS OF THOSE ACCUSED OF WRONG DOING DURING THE BHUTTO REGIME. ALTHOUGH IT WAS SUGGESTED THAT A COALITION GOVERNMENT MIGHT EASE THE TRANSITION TO CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT, PAKISTANI POLITICAL LEADERS, BOTH BEFORE AND AFTER THE ELECTIONS WERE CALLED OFF, WERE SKEPTICAL. THEY FELT IT WOULD ONLY DEFER THEIR COMING TO POWER.

NOW THAT FORMER PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO HAS BEEN CONVICTED OF MURDER CONSPIRACY CHARGES AND SENTENCED TO DEATH, THE IDEA IS AGAIN ATTRACTING INTEREST --ESPECIALLY AMONG MISTER BHUTTO'S FOES IN THE PAKISTAN NATIONAL ALLIANCE, THE LOOSE COALITION OF PARTIES THAT OPPOSED HIM IN CONTROVERSIAL ELECTIONS A YEAR AGO.

THERE ARE SEVERAL REASONS WHY THIS HAS HAPPENED: IN THE FIRST PLACE, THE SO-CALLED ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESS HAS MOVED VERY SLOWLY. THIS AND OTHER CONTINUING UNCERTAINTIES HAVE

CAUSED THE PROMISED NEW ELECTIONS TO FADE EVER FURTHER INTO THE DISTANCE. SECONDLY, AS MISTER BHUTTO'S PROBLEMS HAVE MULTIPLIED, THE BINDING FORCE THAT HELD THE P.N.A. TOGETHER HAS BEEN DISAPPEARING. ONE BY ONE, THE COMPONENT FACTIONS HAVE BEEN GOING THEIR SEPARATE WAYS.

A SENIOR OFFICIAL IN THE P.N.A. RECENTLY TOLD THIS CORRESPONDENT HE STILL HOPED NEW ELECTIONS COULD BE HELD BEFORE THE END OF THIS YEAR AND SAID THAT IF THAT HAPPENED THERE WOULD BE NO REASON TO JOIN A NATIONAL GOVERNMENT. BUT HE CONCEDED THIS MIGHT NOT BE POSSIBLE. HE SAID THE P.N.A. WOULD AGREE TO TAKE PART IN SUCH A GOVERNMENT PROVIDED CERTAIN CONDITIONS WERE SATISFIED.

PAKISTAN'S MILITARY RULER, GENERAL ZIA, TOLD NEWSMEN LAST WEEK THAT THE RESPONSE TO THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT IDEA SO FAR HAS BEEN GOOD. BUT HE SAID THE PROPOSAL WOULD WORK ONLY IF ALL POLITICAL PARTIES JOIN IN.

GENERAL ZIA HAS SAID REPEATEDLY THAT HIS ASSUMPTION OF POWER IS ONLY TEMPORARY--UNTIL NEW ELECTIONS CAN BE HELD. HE INSISTS HE WOULD LIKE NOTHING BETTER THAN TO RETURN TO THE BARRACKS AND GET OUT OF POLITICS. BUT THIS DESIRE HAS BEEN HAMPERED SO FAR BY THE FAILURE OF ANY OF THE COUNTRY'S CURRENT POLITICAL LEADERS TO DEVELOP A STRONG NATIONAL FOLLOWING.

BOTH GENERAL ZIA AND THE PARTY LEADERS APPARENTLY HOPE THAT TAKING PART IN AN INTERIM WOULD GIVE THE POLITICIANS A TASTE OF POWER AND AN OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD A POLITICAL BASE.

GENERAL ZIA APPARENTLY ALSO HOPES THE STEP WILL HELP CONVINCE OTHERS THAT PAKISTAN IS NOW MOVING TOWARD A STABLE, DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED GOVERNMENT.